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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

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STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## **Capitol Update By Senator Howard Marklein May 1, 2015**

### ***Behind the Scenes of the State Budget***

This week the State Capitol was a little quiet compared to the last several months of activity. As we await the new state revenue numbers that are expected during the first week of May, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) took a short break to work on motions, study our budget papers and prepare for non-stop budget work in May.

As we look toward the next several weeks, I thought it might be helpful to tell you about the “Behind the Scenes” happenings of the State Budget. Most residents of our state see very little of this complicated process that has huge impacts on each and every life in our state. I hope the following overview is helpful in your understanding of the process. You have a very important role to play!

The state budget is based on a two-year cycle, called a biennium, stretching from July 1 of odd-numbered years through June 30 of the next odd-numbered year. The current budget (passed in June, 2013) lasts from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015. The budget we are currently working on will be in effect from July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017.

The current budget process started during the fall of 2014. Late last year, all of the state agencies determined their funding and staffing needs for the next biennium. They also worked on major administrative and policy changes that have a fiscal element, which could be included in the budget proposal.

The requests and recommendations from each agency were submitted to the Governor. The Governor and his team analyzed all of the requests and ideas in combination with other priorities and initiatives statewide.

In February, the Governor introduced his budget to the legislature and gave his biannual Budget Address, in which he described many big-picture priorities and initiatives.

Once the budget was introduced, the bill was referred to the JFC for initial legislative consideration. As a member of this committee, I have the unique opportunity to make legislative changes to the budget.

The JFC receives a lot of education and input as we review the budget in its entirety. Since February, we have had agency briefings, in which each agency presents their budget and answers questions from legislators. The non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) also provides an objective overview of the budget proposal and answers hundreds of questions with amazing depth. The LFB is an awesome resource!

As many of you know, we held public listening sessions in each of our districts individually and four state-wide public hearings in locations throughout Wisconsin, including one in Reedsburg.

Each of us has been seeking input from stakeholders, citizens and leaders in our districts about specific topics and inviting our constituents to provide feedback with their concerns. We have sought input from experts and studied the bill in great detail.

Once the public hearings were concluded, all members of the legislature started working on Budget Motions. Motions are our opportunity to make changes to the Governor's proposal. Each member of the JFC is paired with other legislators who do not sit on the committee. These are our "Budget Buddies" and we work with them to sponsor motions, move them through the process and offer our support during Executive Sessions.

I have authored more than 10 motions to address specific issues in the state budget. These motions span from reinstating the Wisconsin Fund for private septic systems to changing the licensing requirements for antique and vintage tractors. As these motions move through the process, I will highlight them in this column and via my weekly E-Update. To see what we have accomplished already, please visit my website and click on "State Budget Update".

The next step in the process is a series of Executive Sessions. Executive Sessions are formal, public meetings during which the JFC and LFB discuss each piece of the budget and vote on specific changes presented in motions. We are able to weigh different options and find the best path forward both fiscally and for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin. Keep in mind that every change we make has a fiscal impact and we must balance additions with reductions in order to produce a balanced budget.

We will be in Executive Sessions nearly every Tuesday and Thursday throughout May until the budget is finished. We have already had three Executive Sessions in April.

Between Executive Sessions, members of the JFC work with our budget buddies and within workgroups to finalize ideas before they are brought for formal votes. There is a lot of discussion, study and research that occurs as each part of the budget is considered.

Once the Executive Sessions are completed, the JFC will submit their version of the budget to the full legislature for a vote. This year, the bill, Senate Bill (SB) 21 will go to the Senate first. Once the Senate approves it, it will be sent to the Assembly. If the Assembly passes it without changes, it will go to Governor Scott Walker for his signature. Our goal is to complete this process by late June. The Governor can veto all or part of the budget and his vetoes can be overridden by a 2/3 vote of both houses of the legislature.

As your State Senator, I am honored to be a part of the JFC and to have an important role in the future of our state. Even though we are well into the budget process, I welcome your input, ideas and concerns. Your personal experiences and ideas are a very important part of this process.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to [Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov). Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.